

INTERVIEWEE: ED PEARL

INTERVIEWER: Victor Cohen

DATE: May 16, 2009

VC: It's the 16th of May, 2009. I wanted to ask you how you transitioned to doing the events you're doing now, the November Second work.

EP: You mean Beyond November.

VC: Mm-hmm, the Beyond November stuff.

EP: Actually, that's exactly what I wanted to talk about.

VC: Oh, good. Good thing I asked.

EP: It's really an interesting thing. I'd done concerts and different things, but in a way, this is the first – well, it was really quite simple, the process. It's interesting that you said "November Second" because – which is not the point. Beyond November meant beyond the election. And that was what I started thinking about before the Ash Grove fiftieth anniversary.

VC: Oh, really. So this goes back to before –

EP: I mean, just thinking about it.

VC: So by the fiftieth anniversary you mean the Royce Hall event?

EP: Mm-hmm. Well, it was Royce Hall two concerts, and then fifteen events in Schoenberg Hall, the free ones. I knew – a gut feeling. It was obvious to me that Obama – that there was the same kind of frustration that had built up around Bush that had built up around Johnson and the war, and then Nixon especially. So it was obvious to me that there was a mass restlessness, and people were sort of dying to

get into changing things, particularly young people. The thing about Obama that made it even more special was his eloquence, and he said the right things and looked like he could win.

I really knew this early, before he purportedly had a chance against Hillary Clinton. I didn't believe that for a minute because he really had organized exactly what he did, which everyone knows about, the whole Internet and using it and all of the most modern technology. And he was completely at ease. He was a younger person and those techniques were not strange to him. Like McCain was completely lost in all of this, totally.

You were there on Friday night when I made that little speech about maybe starting another Ash Grove, and I was thinking that it would be the kind of thing where that if I were sort of handed another club that I could make it as a major use of art and grounding the music in the reality of today and the past, and so on, exactly what I do, and putting a progressive twist on it and allowing things – and I'm sensitive to all of the currents that go on and how to build that, at least have that be a place of gestation where a lot of important things could happen as a result of it, of affecting the political movement, of politicizing the musical movement, of allowing the place to be used for organizing, persuading people to use music as part of what they were doing politically, and so on.

Well, there were two opportunities, concrete opportunities, to pursue the nightclub. One of them, I was prepared to do it. There's a huge property next to a club called the _____, which exists here. And the owner of the _____ and this huge property is sort of a semi-progressive nut who lives here in Echo Park.

Except he's extremely erratic, and the person that led me to him and we met a couple of times just finally capped into his history of just irrationally changing things at the last minute, simply calling up and saying, "I'm sorry. I have an artist I want to put on next Saturday night, so I'm going to use the club." You know, that sort of thing. That's what he does with the _____, which is a nice little club that I've never been to, but I know where it is and all that. And the property next to it would be huge and perfect.

Anyway, but his own temperament and my contact, Linda Crauson – not Linda Crauson, somebody else. I forget her name now. Linda something-or-other. She's a major art figure, and she just said, "I'm sorry. I'm not going to deal with him. You can do it if you want to, but I think you shouldn't." I said, "I know. I have no intention whatsoever of going in without you." Because she was the one that – you know. I think he liked her, whatever. And she said forget about it. So that was that.

The other one was an offer by some of the investor-type people that I think I charmed at the – I don't know who they were, because the son of one of them is an agent for William Morris, and he was the one that called me and did all of this. But they were a group of – according to him – five people who heard me speak that Friday night about the need for a club before profit, and they were interested.

When I thought about it, after a couple of weeks, I realized I didn't want to get involved in that because I just remembered my experience on the pier, how much I hated it and that it would not leave me free, it would be always working to pay back the initial investment and bottom line, and especially with his being an

agent. You know, whatever. They were nice Jewish people with money, but that also might prove to be a problem.

And then I pursued the conceptualizing of still how to do that. I've always had in my corner one of my trainers, Jerry Kay, always telling me that I shouldn't always be looking for the big thing, that you could do things – you don't have to buy something in order to – Jerry, he's great, he's a total buddy.

VC: Your trainer, like your physical –

EP: No, no, no, no, no. I mean like somebody in my corner.

VC: Oh, oh, oh. I thought you meant like somebody you worked out with.

EP: No, no. Just one of my close confidants, Jerry Kay. He worked for me back in '68, '69, and so on. And the guy that left the Ash Grove to head the farm worker boycott for the – after the Teatro Campesino came to the Ash Grove, he left with – (laughs) It was wonderful. It's okay. Because there were others. I miss him. But he was doing great work. He's the one that became a farm worker after heading the boycott in Florida, then in New York, heading the boycott for the whole fuckin' state of New York, or Florida. It's all complicated.

But he comes from a business family. He knows how to deal with reactionaries and still hold – I mean, he's not as political as I am, by any means. He still isn't. It doesn't matter. But anyway, I mean he's a successful businessman. He is. He knows how to deal with money and do all of that stuff. And he invested a lot of money with me in my various projects. But he's always wanted me to start small and slowly build.

So with all of those cautions and all of that, I was thinking of Beyond November as – of course I thought of it as really big. I went around meeting with different social agencies run by progressive people that I knew for a long time. Larry – oh, God. Anyway, a really important renter – the most important renters coalition in Los Angeles, really in the state. He had one of the – the opposition to the landlords trying to eviscerate rent control. Anyway, he was interested, of course. And he brought another figurehead, another major Health and Housing – working with asbestos and all this kind of thing, another Linda. I forget her last name.

Anyway, I met with them, and they were both very interested, but he said, "We'd be happy to come to the major thing there." I was talking about a big summer thing. I already knew where it should be because I'd seen the African Marketplace at the Rancho Cienega, so I went there actually with one of my board members who's also a lawyer, and we got an application and filled it out. And a week later, I met – I went through this before – I met the head of that thing and got involved with the African Marketplace directly, which is an interesting story there, where I am right now with them.

And then the idea, because it was so far away, the idea of – in any event, everyone I spoke to – I had a meeting – I really thought that these progressive people, Gilda Haas, Steve Clare, Carol Tantau, Larry Gross of the Coalition of Economic Survival, that's what it's called. And Linda Kite and people like that. They really didn't have the time to do anything beyond what they were doing. They thought of it as the music being all important, but they were unwilling to do

any organizing. So it became up to me. Not me alone, but me with the Ash Grove board, which we had just founded.

I mean, really, in a serious manner, the Ash Grove Foundation has been around for ten years, but basically it's me, Jerry, who lives in Santa Cruz, Gordy Alexander, who's the head of the union in Glendale and can't help out tomorrow because he managed to force out the Glendale College president as of a few days ago, so there's an emergency meeting of the regents. And of course he being the major opposition to it and the head of the union, has to go to the meeting on Monday night, so he has to spend all of his time preparing. I'm not going to press anybody. And one of Jerry's best friends, actually two of them came as a package. They're childhood friends from the Valley.

Gordy has much more solid politics, and he was with the Ash Grove from '68 through the end. Well, he industrialized so he went to work in a steel mill or something. A real big guy, really strong and all that. But he'll be around. You'll meet him. And Joe Hacker, who was my buddy, was an accountant, so he could do all of the – whatever.

But basically it was a rubber stamp for anything I wanted, so I put on concerts using the Ash Grove name, and we'd cook up temporary crews. But it wasn't really a functioning board or anything. I mean, just – it wasn't.

So after the UCLA thing, I'd worked with all these great people, so that was my big chance. And the only thing I lacked was a lot of younger people, because everyone that was there was very experienced and friends that I'd known for a long time, or whatever. But I made a board, asked people to come, and we signed all the

documents. No, my vote is one vote out of seven, this and that. And there's no clause that gives me any power. I mean, that was a serious question that they referred to the lawyer. Because we have to sign documents. He said, "That means that the board could ask you to leave." I said, "I wouldn't want to work with a board that didn't want to work with me, so I don't have any problem with that." And I don't.

Anyway, so we have a board, and they're all very talented people. Bob _____, who headed Peace Press, which was a major press thing that did all the printing for the Pentagon Papers. And Bob's been in publishing. He heads the comic division for Matt Groening. He's the one that's being the docent tomorrow.

VC: Right, on the Art Walk.

EP: On the Art Walk, yeah. So he can come. He's the treasurer. Harriet Aronow is a Ph.D. who works with people who have disabilities, and their health and healthcare, and so on. She and two others are the experts in that for Cedars Sinai. And she is incredibly busy. She gets to work at seven in the morning. And she brought in one of her daughters, Gabby, Gabriella. And Nora, her other daughter, has a boyfriend now, so forget it. So Harriet's there.

And Irene Wolt is a wonderful writer, important writer. She and Bob Gottlieb wrote the book on the *L.A. Times* a number of years ago. It's basically the history of modern Los Angeles. Unfortunately, she's ill and is not getting better, and she might have to stop being on the board. A couple of others. It doesn't matter.

But I'm the executive director and the president, both. So I'm doing all the work. I still don't know – not having a staff – I mean, we do have some money because we sold all the tapes. I did have sense enough to use – the Ash Grove tapes have been sitting in my various locations for a long time. When we started, it was the only asset of the corporation when we started it ten years ago, so that allowed – I mean, I didn't even know that that meant you didn't get taxed, but we don't. So we were able to make a lot of money, and I was able to pay the lawyer that helped me so much over the years fifteen thousand, and the agent that found the guy that bought it, Bill Sagan[?] also. He got fifteen thousand. So we still have a lot of money. Most of it in a CD now, with a good bank.

We had this big meeting where we were really counting on all these progressive organizations helping build something, but they basically said we'll come to a meeting, but basically the entertainment is the attraction. And maybe they're right.

So we started this thing, and I do all the booking. Really, I won't work with anyone that wants equal power with booking. I have no patience. I don't even want to discuss it or argue it. I accept – anybody has an idea, I'm happy to do so, but I know people, I know the audience, I'm not going to lower my standards, I'm not going to put on acts that people will start calling me and say, "How could you do that?" Never. That's many years beyond that. But nobody has any problem with that now. I mean, initially, Irene being an ardent feminist, she wanted – I gave her the – never mind.

Anyway, so we started whenever it was, last October, I think, and we're about to do our third one. No, no, the first one was the Sunday after Obama was elected, so it was February. So February, every couple of months, and the beginning of April –

VC: What was the first event?

EP: It was at Skylight Books. You came to it. Where Richard Montoya didn't show up till after we closed.

VC: Oh, he came, though.

EP: Yeah, he came. He called me at five-thirty, called me that night. "Where were you?" I said, "Richard –" Never mind. Except Richard rears his head later on in this saga. He's great. I got him on Roseanne's show on Wednesday. I met Roseanne. It was great.

Anyway, and then we had the next – it was really a good show, those two excellent poets. Michelle was superb. Who else played? I can't even remember now. It had to be somebody else. Anyway, I can't remember. What did we do with the slides? I thought we did – no, I guess we didn't have any music with the slides.

And the next one, it was – that was the kickoff, was an attempt to get the press, which didn't come, and to try to seriously build the organization. We built a big mailing list. So far, we haven't built a Beyond November organization. The next one was in South Central in the Southern California Library, with that wonderful drum group, which I've now invited to be in the next one, which will be our big fundraiser in Santa Monica in July.

VC: I missed the drum group. They were good?

EP: They were better than good. They were phenomenal.

VC: How did you hear about them?

EP: I have a dear friend, a great actress and poet and artist, just everything, and is African American, named Sandra Sharp. Now she's changed her name to S. Pearl Sharp, Pearl being one of her relatives that she likes, likes the name better than Sandra. Don't ask me. (chuckles) I'm one of the few people – because I've known her long enough so that I can call her Sandra, but now I've gotten used to calling her S. Pearl. Everyone calls her that. I didn't want to *not* call her that.

She somehow heard about – probably KPFK because she is sometimes on one of the shows there. Tomorrow, she's going to come to the thing, if she can. She has an art installation in a big art gallery in Burbank or someplace like that, and she has to be there. She's doing a workshop there. Anyway, so she knew about the Mawusi drummers, and so she asked them. And with her, if she says it's good, it's good. I know her because in '88 I wrote – the only time I've ever done this actually – wrote a script for a variety show around apartheid. I used Little Steven's thing, Sun City.

VC: I don't know it.

EP: You know, the drummer for Bruce Springsteen in the E Band. So he wrote an anti-apartheid around Sun City, which is a place where tourists go. It's like Las Vegas, seeing South African in Las Vegas. So I picked up on that, and I wrote something, and I took it to a group called Artists Against Apartheid. And of all things, it shouldn't shock me, but there was a wonderful older woman, Frances Williams,

who had been the narrator for the first gospel music I did at the Ash Grove in '58. It was a Bumps Blackwell production. You don't know who Bumps Blackwell is. He was Little Richard's manager. He was Sam Cook's manager. It took me a long while to get a handle on Bumps, but basically he was the one who took Sam Cook and made him a pop singer. He tried to make the gospel thing pop music. He had great strengths and great weaknesses. We got along all these years.

But anyway, I saw the production. And they based it on Langston Hughes' thing when the bicycle lord came to – I can't remember what it was. It was a story about Harlem and involving gospel music and all that but using a text. And she was the text reader. Frances. Wonderful thing, wonderful actress and all of that. Well, she was old then, and then when I met her in '88, you know, from '58, that's thirty years later, she was still older. Remarkably the same gap between me and her – anyway.

She not only said, "This is a great idea," and she said, "We have to do this." Of course she used her big actress voice and _____. (laughs) They loved it. But she was wildly enthusiastic. She says, "Ed, I'm going to direct it." I said, "Thank you, Frances." So what that meant was – first of all, I didn't know this, she's a blacklisted actress. I just didn't know this. I mean, you know, I didn't know. I didn't even know from the blacklist when I started asking her. (laughs) She was really a fine actress. She hated all the other actresses her own age that got all the black women parts and she didn't. (laughs) But anyway, she was a wonderful woman.

What she did is that she taught acting, and she literally pretty much created – she taught almost all of the Americans. She didn't teach Sidney Poitier, but other than him, she taught Roscoe Lee Brown and everyone younger than him. So Frances could get any of them to play in our thing. So what we did is, we played all the high schools.

VC: And this was in the eighties?

EP: Eighty-eight.

VC: So this was your play about apartheid?

EP: So, for the first thing, she brought two of her younger students, Sandra Sharp and Roger Guenveur Smith, who was the light skinned black person in all of Spike Lee's films. When they need a light skin, like when they go on the bus to wherever they're going, to some rally, he's the light skinned person. So Roger, who lives in the area, is going to be there, by the way. His girlfriend told me that they were coming.

VC: Great.

EP: So she chose S. Pearl and Roger to be part of the thing. And I did all the music, and I made sure that we had other races. The first thing we did was for – it was really interesting. It was upcoming at some connection with the person who's now the supervisor, but then he was the head of SCLC, Mark Whitley Thomas. And I had done a concert with Gil Scott Heron for SCLC years before, so I knew Mark. We were sort of competitors. I don't know, whatever it is. We sort of argued with each other. We both respect each other, too. Anyway, I saw him a few weeks ago

and it was fine. I told him I saw him speak at an event. He said, "Oh, you should have said hello." Whatever.

So they were having, by coincidence, a convention of the National Education Association. Every teacher in Los Angeles was there. So we did our first show before all the teachers. Well, guess what, we were booked for the next twenty-eight weeks. We did the show once a week, and we did it at twenty-eight different locations. It was like auditioning before – and the best possible audience. I mean, we were aware of that. I think I was the one that flashed on that thing happening, but it doesn't matter, whoever flashed on it, it was so obvious. And we had a great performance. And they were great.

And then, S. Pearl and Roger became standard. Why? All right. The first time, that night, she read it, she read my script as I wrote it. By the next event, like three weeks later when we started the actual tour – and these were noontime lunch hour things. That means exactly fifty minutes, and that's what we did. By the second show, Sandra had made it into a spiritual. What I wrote, she changed it. And it was much better. And she's so beautiful, and she has such a great voice. It was like, you know, forget it. I was thrilled.

And Roger played basketball while he was doing his part, and then he'd improvise on it. It turned out that he had always heard about the Ash Grove. He's much younger than I. So he started – he got a nightclub. He thought he was doing the same thing as the Ash Grove, or he wanted to do the same thing.

So anyway, so I had this relationship with these two people immediately. And S. Pearl had heard about the first show, so she came to it. I can't remember, I

don't think you were in the – I think you were in the section of the main – well, in the other section, which is where people that came early were, that's where Sandra was. Oh no, that's right. She said that at the next show, the one at the – she said that when she heard about it she could not stop from coming because she knew it would be great.

VC: And these were the Beyond Novembers.

EP: Yeah, the Beyond November things. So then she got the Mawusi dancers. I know her art. Anything she wanted, I'd do.

VC: Did the anti-apartheid thing go around high schools?

EP: High school and junior high.

VC: And were the kids – did they bring them in to the –

EP: It was a regular assembly. And in three or four of the cases, the principals got up and almost spoke with tears in their eyes about this is the best thing that they've ever had. I was told that by so many people. It was really great. And Frances and I sort of financed it ourselves. Then we put on a big show at James Lawson's church, James Lawson being Martin Luther King's assistant. Jim Lawson. He was a preacher, now he's retired. But anyway, his big church – it doesn't matter where it is. It's on Adams Boulevard, but I forget the name of it. Anyway, we drew a huge house and we were able to pay back what we spent, and I think we gave the rest to the ANC, I think, or something.

VC: So while you were doing that in '88, was there an Ash Grove Club as well?

EP: No.

VC: That's when you were just booking shows.

EP: Yeah. Well, right after that, I tried again – it was '88. I can't remember. When Mandela got out a couple years – actually, '88 was probably the – I can't remember if it was before, so it'd be '86 or '90. I literally can't remember. No, it had to be before, so it was probably '87 or something like that. Because then, after that, I did try again to start the Ash Grove in Hollywood. And that didn't work out, we didn't have the money. It was a good place. I wanted it in the center of the city. Anyway, it doesn't matter. I did the thirtieth anniversary of the Ash Grove at the Wiltern Theater. I had two nights, country and then blues.

But the anti-apartheid thing was really a huge success. And I'd been talked into helping a woman whose husband teaches African Studies. I can't remember her name now either. He teaches at UCLA, recently died, and there was a big thing in the paper about him. He's from Nigeria, I think. But she was from South Africa, and so she wanted to picket the thing. She heard I might help her, so she talked me into – so the two of us started picketing the South African – (laughs) So then I started organizing people to come because we didn't want just two of us. So it took on and became a whole thing. And then she brought her children, who could do the South African boot dance that Mary _____ used to do. And they knew all the dances and the songs and they would teach – I guess her husband was from South Africa, too.

And then, from that sprang the idea of, you know, well, I'm doing nothing but walking around in a circle. You have a lot of time to think. (both laugh) You do. What are you going to do when you're picketing an embassy. So that's what

started the tour. It was a great tour, and it was exhausting. It took a lot of time, four or five, six months. That was enough for me.

So we did the thing with the Mawusi dancers, and Bernie playing guitar, with his slides and the rest of it, poetry, and so on. So it was really – that was good. Now this one, more of a Latin theme. We're in a more Chicano/Mexicano neighborhood.

VC: Where is it again? I forgot.

EP: Well, it's very close to here actually. It's a little bit south and west. It's near Beverly and Alvarado.

VC: Okay, sure. Based on how things were going, how do you think the project's working out?

EP: Well, I don't want to jinx myself, but this last week has been one of the most phenomenal weeks of my life. At least that I can remember.

VC: Really. How so? That's quite a statement.

EP: Just as a serious breakthrough, potentially a very big breakthrough in this whole project. For our first thing, in February, I asked Michelle Shocked to do the promo at KPFK, so we went there and we didn't have the studio until let's say three o'clock. We had lunch and then we drove over there, and it was two o'clock. Or no, maybe – whatever. It doesn't matter. Anyway, the timing was that I was – so I said, "Well, how about –" And she has a computer always with her, so I said, "Could you work here and then let me go to –" Because I wanted to talk to the people getting on the website and blah, blah, blah. I have old friends there I wanted to contact.

So while she was there, Roseanne came in to do her show. It was on a Wednesday. So it must have been we had the studio at five o'clock because Roseanne's show's at five. So we were sitting there before. Michelle was just sitting there typing. Roseanne came over, "Oh, you're Michelle Shocked. I love your songs." And she said, "You gotta be on my show." So after we did all the thing, driving home Michelle was telling me about Roseanne _____ and she asked me if I could handle it. All the artists think I'm their agent. I'm serious. So I said, "Of course." I mean, I would do it anyway, but I really like her. So I did. Richard does the same thing with me. He doesn't do any _____. He expects me to magically prepare him. Well, that's what I meant. That's one of the things –

Anyway, so I finally learned who to talk to about that. And Christine Blodale, who I guess is head programmer or something. She isn't – yeah, maybe she's – somehow she – maybe she's the producer for – I think she is, come to think of it, the producer. Yeah, Alan Minsky is the senior producer, one of the two senior producers, and Christine is the other one. Roseanne falls under Christine. So she did talk to her and they just – because Michelle's always traveling, _____.

So then I get this thing, and there's Richard, who's really funny, and Roseanne, who's really funny. So I talked to Alan Minsky, who is the other senior producer, whom I know extremely well from – he was part of the group that worked with me to overthrow the people that had taken over Pacifica back in 2000, or 1999. And then I created this organization, PRCR, which is an acronym for Responsible Community Radio. I didn't say responsible. Somebody put it in there because it was better PRCR than PICR. You couldn't pronounce that. So

responsible Community Radio. I guess that means not yelling out about dirty Jews.

(both laugh) I'm serious.

VC: Really.

EP: Yeah, literally. Yes, they are still around, but things are changing. So anyway, so Alan's like a buddy. Plus he's married to Sheila Nichols. She's a wonderful singer. I did a benefit for a friend, Gary Silberger, who's running for Culver City city council. Now he's the mayor, but anyway, he was running for Culver City city council. I did all the entertainment for an event that took place at the same place we're going to do the fundraiser, in Santa Monica. It's a really nice place. They're also friends of mine, a married couple, and the kids are gone. They're both lawyers. She does wills and he does real estate. He knows real estate and got this place for a song, literally. Because all the electricity rotted, in this very nice estate house. So what they did is, they just forgot about it. They just installed, on the outside, electronic stuff, so they didn't have to tear down the house in order to put in new wires. They just replaced it with modern – like you press a button and your doorbell rings when there's no doorbell, et cetera.

VC: So why has this past week been so good?

EP: Long story short is that Sheila was supposed to be the opening act for Michelle. Well, Michelle didn't show up, so Sheila just carried on. And she was so good that nobody missed the show. And, let's see, Debra Bowen, who is now the secretary of the state, one of my former lawyers, Debra was there, and Sheila Kuehl was there, and the people I was working with – I'm working with the same group now for our

fundraiser. We just had our first meeting. And the same two women who really put that thing together are wildly enthusiastic about this.

So yeah, Sheila was that good. And Michelle plum forgot. She remembered later that day. She called me that night. She was almost in tears. She said, "I'll do anything. What do you want?" I said, "Well, let's have lunch." (laughs) Really becoming close friends. She's a sweetie and she's part of – she considers herself part of the organizing group.

VC: For the –

EP: Yeah, November. She's completely committed. She'll play any time that she's not on the road.

VC: Is she in L.A. now?

EP: Right now? No.

VC: I mean, like is she based in L.A.?

EP: She's in Baltimore. She's flying back tomorrow morning. She's getting up at four in the morning. She takes a plane from Baltimore at seven in the morning to get here. Swear to God. And then she has to change planes or something. No, she tours constantly, like Bob Dylan. She was a big star at one time, and now she's a very attractive booking – a headliner, but not the same level that she was when – she never went commercial, she never wanted to. She was an accidental big star.

VC: Right. That first record was just magnificent.

EP: Yeah. She was singing at a campfire and somebody recorded it, and they sent it to the guy in England and he put it out. And people started telling her she was a star. She didn't know what they were talking about until they said your song is going all

over the world. She had to go to a record store and buy it to find out that she really was. Anyway, she was like a goofy kid, high half the time anyway. That's what happened, basically. But she's a great artist.

VC: So what came together this past week?

EP: So what happened – Alan's married to Sheila Nichols, so I booked – because it's at the same house where she was such a big hit, I figured a lot of people would know her. She's stunningly beautiful. She's a great pianist. She's a classical pianist from England. She's really just outstanding. So, independently of Alan, I called up Sheila and asked her if she'd like to be part of this. This was like two months ago. She said, "Absolutely."

So then Alan, who loves his wife and all that, plus he likes me a lot, so he does what he can. So Alan talked to Christine and had her approach Roseanne for Richard. So she said yes. What I didn't know – then it turned out that Richard – I wound up recording the promo for the show because I had told Richard that we had a responsibility to do it, two weeks ago, and he just plum forgot and he didn't do it. He said he didn't know – so I had to step in at the last minute and just write up the thing. That was the start of the week of hell. It was actually a week from last Monday, or Wednesday, so it was like a week and a half.

Then come towards this week, it turns out that Christine had sold it to Roseanne on the basis of Richard knowing a lot about Beyond November and Single Payer Health. Well, he doesn't know anything. I mean, he lives about a block away. He's kind of a buddy of mine. But he doesn't really – and he likes me, but he doesn't really know the politics of what we're doing, even though he's on my

list. I'm telling you, he doesn't. So I had to prepare a tutorial for him. And at the same time getting all these calls that Bob couldn't do it because he's going to be a docent.

And it turns out that the guy doing the Ash Grove table, Bill McCarthy, which I didn't know, nobody knew, he's the co-chair of the United Nations Association of Los Angeles. His co-chair had a stroke, so he has to make a speech in Whittier Downs tomorrow morning. It was going to be tomorrow afternoon, but he – anyway, so then he told me he couldn't come. So then I talked him into – demanding that instead of putting him on at two in the afternoon, we'd put him on to open the conference. He managed to do – that made sense to him. But he _____. Then he got someone to drive him, so now he'll be here at one-thirty, he tells me. I mean, I have a phone message.

So Gordy calls up and tells me about they managed a big success, but that means that he can't come, because he was supposed to do all the seating. Gordy was the nighttime manager of the Ash Grove, and I feel completely comfortable with him when he's around because he knows not only me and the events, but I trust his judgment completely about timing, about when to notify artists, how to arrange seating, just all the requirements of somebody who knows how to do all these things. Plus he's genial and he's big and jolly and funny. He can throw somebody out because he's really big and surly and not afraid, et cetera.

So he calls up. He can't come. And then Harriet reminds me that she can't come because she – and her daughter also can't come because they have a big family thing. As it is, right now, she looks like she's going to get out of the family

thing and just come down anyway while they're at her house. (laughs) It's some occasion that she completely – so it was like that.

Irene can't come because she's ill. So basically, Adele Wallace is doing all the shopping, which normally Harriet does. Plus, she's in charge of the health thing. So this and that. Then I didn't have any chairs, so I had to arrange all the chairs. David left to go to France. So my board is gone, and so on, so I'm suddenly dumped with all this stuff on me. So it was just like a nightmare.

And then with Richard, I really had to prepare a tutoring session to get him there early enough – it's the anxiety of knowing I'm dealing with – Richard is an incredibly brilliant, incredibly creative, gifted human being. And he's working on four scripts at the same time. I was over at his house. He has four piles. And he really – that's what he does. And so everything else – and it turns out – I didn't know this until we had a serious talk about why he was so scattered. He's now in demand for movies, script writing, and all this stuff, so he has all these projects. He's writing major plays. He's writing one for the Shakespeare play up in Ashland, Oregon. That's one of his projects. He just was in Oregon for five days. He's having all these things going on. I said, "What's going on on the west side?" I thought maybe he was recording or something. No, it was that he had to go to studio meetings because they were – I mean, it was like – so when I got him sat down, we actually – but then as soon as I get him to sit down, all the people want to come talk with him.

Now, this should go no further, even if it happens. Alan wanted to talk with him. First of all, they offered him a show. Secondly, they're trying to cook up a

thing at which there's going to be – now it's between KPFA and KPFK, Berkeley and Los Angeles. They're right now doing a news broadcast – I listened to it last night – which they do part of it here, part of it there. They want to do a talk show, and they want him as host of it. And it could go national. So they talked about it, and Richard was honest, he said, "I don't know because I've got all these projects." But basically, there was some serious stuff. I didn't realize that he was that much on everybody's mind, I really didn't.

So I had to prepare this thing, and I prepared it while I'm doing all this other stuff and negotiating with the – it's the anxiety. I couldn't get a hold of the guy with the chairs, and the guy with the truck, he can't do it tomorrow morning because they've adopted this woman and she now has two kids and she's all screwed up and they have to take care of them. They're one and three years old and he has to watch them tomorrow. That's why we're moving the chairs today. It's a good thing anyway because now I've got Eric coming down. I was unsure that Eric would even do the sound, and all that, but now he's becoming more steadfast in his ties. So he's meeting us there today at two o'clock.

So anyway, Richard did that. And then he recorded – I wanted to do it only for one week and I wanted him to record it – no, actually I did it last Friday, a week from yesterday, so it was on Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. I wanted Richard to record a different one, so I sent him the thing and told him that. Of course he never even had looked at the script. But basically, he read my script and just vamped on it. He said, "Hi, this is Ed Pearl, and then he said something in

Spanish." It was really funny what he did. He took my script and did it. And with me, I was like five seconds to –

Oh yeah, and then I kept getting flak that the script – I couldn't get anyone to answer my emails or calls or messages, and they just take their time nowadays. The person in charge, Jennifer _____, she took all the adjectives out of what I said, so all of the charm of it was just stripped bare. She said we have a maximum of a hundred and twenty-five words. But I had timed it myself. I know that I aim for fifty-five and it's going to hit it. And I had done my own editing to accommodate everything. But then I couldn't get a hold of her, so I just brought down the script anyway. And then, fortunately, my good buddy Mark Maxwell volunteered to be the engineer, so he just did it. Then it turns out that there was tagline she wanted to put in, which made it to one minute and five seconds, and I had to knock it down to fifty-five, so then Mark speeded it up. So consequently, it was a little bit fast, but I sounded like I did about thirty years ago. I'm serious. Speaking faster and slightly higher, and whatnot. So all in all it was good. So then Richard took what I did and now his thing is playing.

VC: I'll have to tune in and listen.

EP: Yeah. That was really good. So, while I was there, while we were there doing that, Alan says, "What about we can –" Because Sonali was also part of the group, with Alan. They were the two station people. We had candidates from the listener audience, of which I was one, on the board. And we had our two station reps and they were Sonali and Alan because they were both very popular figures. He's a great producer, programmer, or the producer, I guess. And she is a popular host

and all that, good politics, whatever. One of the group _____. So I knew both of them.

So anyway, he said he was going to ask Sonali. I said okay, but – because I was telling him how great the Great Lit Players were. So he said that Sonali would do it. I said, "Well, lookit, why don't you try Jerry Quickley. He's a poet and all that." And Alan said, "Good idea!" Of course, Alan is Jerry's producer, so that's where they were on Friday. We call them up just on Thursday, because this was all Wednesday. I said, "Alan, you better first talk to Sonali, and if she wants him for Friday morning, you're going to have to call just to find out if they're free." Because I knew if they were in the poetry – the National Poetry Competition in Sacramento, the regionals, are happening today. That's where they are, right now, and they're coming back tomorrow morning.

Oh yeah. Then what happened was, while I'm sitting with Richard, Roseanne comes in and somebody introduced us. The guy that she comes with –

VC: Her co-host?

EP: Yeah, her co-host. He recognized Richard. He was in first and then she came in. But somehow Richard was introduced, and the two of them spoke a little bit. And then Richard introduced me to her. I think Alan introduced me to her. Yeah, Alan introduced us. He asked, "Do you know anything about the Ash Grove, did you ever hear of it?" and she said, "No." And he and Maggie Lepique both started talking to Roseanne, who sat down at the same time. What they were saying – first of all, it was confusing because there were two of them talking. Secondly, they don't really understand what I did at the Ash Grove.

After about five seconds of chaos I said, "Roseanne, I'm Ed Pearl. I actually started the Ash Grove. It's my thing. Can I talk?" So I talked to her, and I could see that it really made – her body posture was – and I began thinking afterward – well, I didn't have to because I'd thought about this a long time, that I dignified cultures in my own way, through the music, through their music, by them. Roseanne did the same thing for working class suburbia in her comedy show. And she took it very seriously, and she was true to their values, which was different than my bringing them with their art.

But they're not going to be able to go on a TV show and make jokes like she can do. It's a different field. But her consciousness, and that she would – even though she's kind of a brilliant ditz, right? Whatever it is, she intuitively knew what she could do and what she couldn't do. Right on. She never made fun of them. She was one of them. She became one of them. And all the things. And she could get serious and talk seriously to her husband, or Darlene, or whatever. That's something I really always admired about her. I was very conscious of it. I remember hearing her say someplace, or reading it, saying that nobody understands that I'm actually putting on working class comedy. So I could see that she was really affected by it.

Finally, she says, "Do you know Pete Seeger?" I said, "Yes, I know Pete Seeger. Actually, I was his producer for all these years, here in this area." She said, "Would you tell him I love him?" I said yes. Then she had to go. Alan said it's time to go. And then she went in and did her show, or Christine came by.

So Alan then calls me up and says that Sonali can't do it. Then he calls back two hours later and says, "Jerry Quickley can do it." Or he left a message. I stepped out. And he said, "I got Jerry Quickley, and they're going to do it." I didn't know, because I knew they were going off to Sacramento this morning. So I didn't know that.

So then I felt obligated to go back down yesterday, so I did that. And I'm really happy, not to be on the show, but I mean just to see, because so much good happened when I was there the last time. It finally occurred to me, one reason that I sometimes have trouble getting publicity is that I don't hang around with people. I just don't. And I don't drop in at KPFK and all that.

So we were there, and it was a very good thing I was there, because the Pocho Hour was on, and when those guys came out of the show – and then a group of their hanger-ons were out there. It was good because I was able to – I don't know. Somehow we got into a serious conversation about the Ash Grove, because their person who does their DJ stuff, the turntable wasn't working, so they did the show without his doing DJ. So we were just sitting out there. So we were talking about music. And he really understood what the Ash Grove – the traditional music part. We really had a good conversation with these two people.

But then other people started coming out before the Pochos got done. They're on four to five, and they're going like wild in there. And then Diane walks in with several of them. Anyway, these are kids, aside from Diane and one woman whose name I forget right now, who's a little bit older. She's like in her middle

twenties maybe. I can't really tell. Diane, I don't know how old she is. She looks like a kid herself.

But anyway, so Diane said, "Do you want water?" I said, "Diane, concentrate on the show. I'll get all the water. I'll do all the things." So I did what I know how to do. I went out and got the water, and got all the things like that, and this and that. I'm glad I did that because Diane was going to try to fit a table so they could bring a table there to sell stuff. So I said, "Instead of four tables, I'm going to get five." Then she didn't know how she was going to pile people into the car from the airport with a table.

So I performed that, and I focused her. I gave her some of the material that I had given to Richard, a couple of things about Beyond November that if – as she could talk about the Summer Festival. There's one paragraph that's really excellent, describing the summer project, how it would be different, and so on.

VC: What time is it?

EP: Eleven-thirty.

VC: I've got to go home fairly quickly.

EP: Anyway, so it was very – it was excellent. And I asked them if they would – after I heard them on Jerry's show, they were so good. Jerry just thought they were fantastic. They stayed there like ten minutes after his show, talking in that studio. When I talked to Diane, because I called her up yesterday morning to congratulate her on being on Jerry Quickley's show, tell her I was there, so I would take care of things. And – I forget what I was going to say.

Oh yeah. So she said, "I looked up Jerry Quickley on Google." She Googled him, and she said he won the national championship. So this was the kids going up for the regional. So he's won it like two times.

VC: How old is he?

EP: Jerry? I don't know. Forty, something like that. Have you ever seen him?

VC: No.

EP: He's like six-five, must weigh three hundred and fifty pounds, very light skinned black guy with an Afro, like that. He's wearing a muumuu now, he's that big. I don't know, he's a giant. But anyway, so she was really thrilled that he would know – that she's a real mensch. So they were talking, and Jerry was really impressed with them, really, sincerely impressed. He's sort of a bullshitter a lot, but no, he really, really liked them. He was talking with them afterwards, staying in there. And I think that that would be a very invaluable contact. And Diane understands that.

So I asked them afterwards if they would play the fundraiser, and they said yes. She said, "Absolutely." So I already have my show. I've asked S. Pearl to get the Mawusi drummers, too. So we'll have a really great poetry thing, a really great thing. And Michelle and Richard have all agreed to be emcees. So I got it together. As soon as this is done, then I can go to work on that. And then I have a publicist. We've hired a publicist. It's Ernie's publicist who got that big article in the *L.A. Times*. And Teresa Conroy, she's come to the shows and we've talked. You'll meet her at some point. She won't be there tomorrow. She has a – I forget

the name of it, from Belize. What's it called? There's a word. There's a festival of – it was a _____ festival. She's the publicist for that, so she has to be there.

So it was really good, and I really cemented, I think, a really good relationship with Diane and the group and with the kids. Because I'd sort of met them at the Book Fair, but I didn't really meet them as people. So we met and I talked to them, and so on. And I knew that would happen, that that was a good thing, that I had to do that, that I take them seriously. That's part of the job. Not just playing the thing in my head, which I know how to do, but it's the other part of it that is difficult for me.

VC: Yeah, I can see why it would be an eventful week.

EP: Yeah. It was really ups and downs. It was phenomenal. It just keep going down and up again. Then Billy calls and leaves a message when I got in last night, after that thing. And then the other thing that was really funny, I said, "Does anyone want a ride to Echo Park?" That's where I go. And Diane said, "Oh no, they haven't eaten since lunchtime and I have to take them for dinner." I realized that, of course, she really – I'm complaining about my week, just think about – and then she's picking them up and taking them to the airport this morning.

But we had about ten minutes or fifteen minutes alone and I asked her what she did. She's an actress in commercials. That's how she's financing this. So she said, "I looked at myself and I said, do you want to be an actress in commercials for another ten years? Hell, no. I want to do something with my life." Now, she is potentially extremely progressive and political, but she doesn't know enough to really know that. But she's just thrilled with the Ash Grove and Beyond November

and me. It's like a new world to her. She said, "Will this fit in? We're playing for SCIU." Because they're going to cut, I don't know, salaries or something like that. They're going to cut ten percent of all the workers and all that. And she's a member of the Hollywood union, so she's a unionist because she herself depends on acting. So she was doing that. She said, "Do you think that would be okay to tell Jerry?" I said, "Of course." To announce that they're playing at a benefit today, or whenever.

So all in all it's a really good thing. So the potential for it, now that I have made a commitment and everyone at KPFK knows me, and Alan is running with it, I'm sure I can get Sonali for the next one, for the thing there, because she didn't have _____. I mean, Sonali could not just pick up and interview people for a show the next day _____. You can talk with her until eleven o'clock Thursday morning. Well, of course she already had Friday morning. She'd been there since six in the morning.

So it all worked out. I really feel good about it. So Larry asked that I call the chair guy and I had to wait till he answered. Could I pick them up on Saturday? I didn't know. I didn't know if they were using those same chairs or not, because it was a nightclub. So everything's fine now. So that's what it is.

I think that there's potential for – well, Teresa will open it up more because she has relations with *L.A. Times* people and all of that. And I do, but they haven't responded to me yet, so I'll let her do her thing on this big thing. There are enough professionals in this area, so I'm fairly sure I can – and it's my audience, the core audience from the Ash Grove, I mean wealthier people who now live on the west side. So I can push that easy.

And I got the right acts for that, too. Exotic drummers. That's why I changed it. I wrote a thing. She said she loved it so much, she said, "Ed, we already put it in our slogan. Is that okay?" Yeah, I call them the Wizards, the Teenage Wizards. I was thinking I've got to tell her that. First of all, wizards suggest quickness and also magic. And the Wizard of Oz. What I didn't really think – for me, really, wizards come from the fascination with that. With my granddaughter, with the Harry Potter series. I'm going to tell that to Diane, but she's already done that. And she said, "By coincidence, we had our tee shirts –" They got tee shirts and everything. And she said, "It's made by the Wizard Company." So it's already on the back of the tee shirts. So it was a total score.

So that's why I'm feeling good now. Even Harriet normally – like Jerry and Gordy, they hold down my fantasies. Harriet says that she thinks we'll have over a hundred people tomorrow.

VC: Great. Well, I'm looking forward to it.

EP: Yeah.

[end]